TRACER

McHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AN ILLINOIS CORPORATION (not for profit)

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CURATOR'S LETTER

"From the Curator"

Our many thanks to the staff and directors of the McHenry County CETA program for their support in providing workers for the museum. Mike Soja, David Martin, Paul DiVerda and Henry Herrera will be with us for the next year and are very welcome additions to the museum staff. One major project that they will be involved in will be organizing a research library for the museum. The library will focus primarily on McHenry County and will provide information for genealogical and historical research. The Library will be open to the general Public with assistance available.

As we reach the end of another season at the museum, I would like to thank all of those who were involved in our Sunday programs. The programs have been most interesting and have introduced numerous people to the museum. We look forward to next year's programs with anticipation, and hope that you will be able to share them with us.

Mark Haggitt
Curator.

SUNDAY PROGRAMS

Since Mark has mentioned these in his letter, we will proceed to the Sunday programs as the next item for the Newsletter. But before we begin on those of the last quarter, we have some information to pass on about an earlier one, the Woodstock Day in May. Miss Alice Clark sent me word after the publication of the summer Tracer that there had, in fact, been a lovely program for the Memorial Day weekend. The Rev. Kenneth Hanson, pastor of the Grace Evangelical Church at Woodstock gave the invocation and a short memorial address, weaving in the museum's Civil War flag which he had observed while browsing. This was followed by a greeting and a short talk by Mrs. Frances Kuhn, mayor of Woodstock. A greeting was also given by Shuji Kimura, president of the Historical Society. The feature of the program was a half hour of singing and step dancing by the seven McCormack children which was enjoyed by everyone.

Miss Clark apologized for not informing The Tracer, but I think we have been lax, and are glad to get the information to pass on. Perhaps next year people will remember about this year's Memorial Day Weekend and know that a holiday does not mean "No Program At The Museum".

We have reports on some of the other Sunday programs to give you. On the last Sunday in September, the museum rang with old time concertina music. Dorothy Northrop and members of the adult group of St. John's United Church of Christ of Union had arranged to have Elmer Piske, who has been playing the accordion for fifty years, play a few more hours for the enjoyment of museum visitors. And it was enjoyed greatly.

On October seventh, The McHenry County museum honored the 4-H clubs to start National 4-H Week with a flourish. Laura Heinberg of Marengo and Theresa Bychowski of Union organized a program to typify what the 4-Hers are all about. They showed arts and crafts projects in Eckert Hall, sewing, crotcheting, ceramics, woodworking, electricity. They could not bring their animals inside the museum building but they have them to exhibit, also. Two clubs were responsible for the projects completed for that special showing, the Clover Leaf Boosters Club from Marengo, and the Unionettes and Knights from Union. This was a different Sunday and will inspire other younger members to provide them.

The following week, on the fourteenth, the president of the board, Shuji Kimura, hosted the afternoon. His plans included an old time cider press being operated not only by Shuji, himself, but also by the children who would be sampling the apple juice. Mr. Kimura had the cider press on hand one Sunday in 1978, too, and a good many people hope his program never changes!

REMEMBER THE OLD FASHIONED RECIPE?

A lady sent a note with the following recipe, saying that she has made this fruit bread for ten years or more, and sometimes substitutes dates for the prunes. She also says, "Mary Thill gave this recipe to Mrs. Spoden - Spaden? - long ago. How old it is, I really do not know." She thought it might be nice to share it with us at this time as there will not be another Tracer before the holidays.

FRUIT BREAD

Add 2 cups of prunes cut fine to 2 cups of water and 2 teaspoons of soda. Let stand one half hour.

Cream 2 cups of sugar, 2 tablespoons of fresh churned butter, and 2 fresh eggs that have been well beaten.

Add a portion to the prunes and water. Then a portion of 4 cups of flour, mixed with 1 teaspoon of salt. Then again the creamed sugar, butter, eggs. Then the flour, until all are used. Flavor with vanilla, and add nuts-hickory nuts are very good.

Half fill greased cans, not too large, and bake in a slow to medium oven, being careful to keep your fire at about the same heat, for sixty minutes to ninety minutes.

The Tracer really appreciates your help, and that of the others who sent old recipes. But please, in the future, may we have the name of the sender? This was not the only one without a donor's name. The other recipes will be used in later issues.

NEWS FROM BOARD MEETINGS.

C.E.T.A. Help

Since Mark has already mentioned this in his letter perhaps we may as well begin here. He thanked the staff at the McHenry County program, but we think he deserves some thanks, too. At the October Board meetings, not only for the reasons before mentioned, but since C.E.T.A. workers must be supervised by the arrangement with the

program, this, too, had to be worked out. To be sure, it is for just such things that the Board decided to hire a curator. But when work is accomplished, it is nice to credit it.

MORE THANKS

The thanks of the Board of Directors is extended to Mrs. William Schaurer of Union who did the financial books of the Society without renumeration.

At one of the meetings this quarter, discussion rose as to some way the different local governments who have contributed to the Museum's funds from the Federal Revenue Sharing monies could be properly recognized. It has been moved and passed that a list of all these donors be displayed on a poster each year.

The Tracer Editorial Board would like to extend its thanks to Jack Satorius for the pictures he made of the "washing machine factory'" and the other places that are part of the story of that Dunham family. Readers will enjoy them further on in this newsletter.

At the August meeting (after the August issue of The Tracer had gone to press), it was announced that Clyde Blackwell of McHenry was willing to donate his piano to the museum. A piano that could be used for programs was needed. Alice Clark was able to secure the help of Mrs. Jerome Sharpe of McHenry in establishing the condition of the piano, and when Miss Clark reported it to be in good shape, the Board voted to accept it. They wish to thank both Mr. Blackwell for the piano, and Mrs. Sharpe for checking it for the Society. We hope Mr. Blackwell will come to see it in use when programs begin again next year.

Because all the acquisitions are not mentioned in The Tracer does not mean that all are not appreciated. Letters of thanks go out to every donor, and perhaps the sincerest thanks are those of the visitor who stands and gazes, and comments on the artifact when it is displayed. It is a most enjoyable moment to know that one has helped someone else understand life in McHenry county as it was in previous times.

The Tracer staff would also like to offer our thanks to the Misses Alice and Leta Clark, who are faithful contributors to the Newsletter. We appreciate any help that is extended to us--it is impossible to cover the whole county as thoroughly as we would like--but there are few issues of The Tracer that have not been bettered by help from these two ladies.

Although our list of thank yous may be overlong this quarter, we cannot stop without including this contribution, which is both sincere and accurate.

Our last issue honored Mr. and Mrs. Pankonin of Alden. This time a person from the neighboring town of Harvard has been selected. Thresile Mulvenna deserves recognition which is long overdue. As a director, she has faithfully attended board meetings and has served as a committee of one to provide coffee and a bite to eat after the long sessions. Sometimes it's a delicious sandwich, another time, cookies or even pumpkin squares!

Thresile has been a regular docent since the Museum opened on July 4th, 1976. Working on Sundays, she usually mans the registration table where she's exceptionally good at public relations.

All of our readers owe Thresile a vote of thanks. It is she who types all the mailing labels for The Tracer, and when each issue is off the press, it is Mrs. Mulvenna who takes charge of getting the labels pasted on and getting The Tracer in the mail to all of you.

The Historical Society would be lost without Thresile Mulvenna. It is most grateful that she takes time out from her busy schedule to help in so many ways.

Thresile is also responsible for numerous memorials in the names of those whom she has loved who are deceased.

OTHER NEWS FROM BOARD MEETINGS.

The heavy beams that are to hold the log cabin are in place on the slab, and ready for the cabin. The transfer, repair and maintenance of the cabin has been a subject much discussed by the Board, and it is hoped that in the spring when the Museum reopens, the cabin will be ready, correctly furnished. Dorothy McEachren, president emeritus, has a book, Cabin in the Clearing, that could be of help choosing the correct items to be shown there. We waited to thank Knute Olsen in this paragraph for the beams.

Other often discussed problems are finances and fund raising, a constant worry for a not-for-profit organization. Almost as constant are the questions that come up as to repair and maintenance. At present, it is the painting and repair of the cupola and allied matters that has been requiring the attention of curator and board on that line of thought, and attendance at revenue sharing meetings on the fund raising side.

These matters and any others concerning the Museum can demand a good deal of traveling about. In the October meeting a report was made of what was learned when Mark Haggitt, curator, President Shuji Kimura and Board Member Jack Satorius met with the Director of Development of the Chicago Historical Society. That director discouraged us from applying for federal grants, but the Board thought we should still try for certain ones, This will be done.

NEW DIRECTOR

At the August meeting, Avis (Mrs. Herman) Pankonin of Alden, intruduced Miss Janet Kingsley, a retired school teacher, as one who would take Mrs. Pankonin's place on the Board. Mark Haggitt, speaking for the Board urged Mrs. Pankonin to stay on in addition to Miss Kingsley, since that would still make only two directors from the Alden area.

HELP PLEASE!

We now have the census reports for McHenry County through 1900 on microfilm. It would be much to the Society's and Museum's advantage to have a microfilm reader. We have heard of some that were thrown away after it was too late to ask for them. This, of course, by organizations and businesses that use them a great deal more than we would, and must have the latest version of the reader. If you know of any such place getting a new one, would you ask for the old one? If enough of us work at it, surely one will come to hand, and we will not have to spend Museum money for it.

Also, we have had no replies at all to last quarter's appeal for help in identifying the picture. Won't you look again and see if you can recall it?

A SPECIAL RECOGNITION

In recent action by the Board of Directors, the McHenry County Historical Society is awarding a certificate of appreciation to Ruth Cripe of Marengo.

Ruth and her busband, Otis, have been actively involved in the affairs of the society since joining in 1968. Ruth has been vice-president and, most recently, treasurer of the society until her resignation this year for health reasons.

It was due to Ruth's efforts that the museum received its first matching grant. She also prepared the way for our participation in the federal revenue sharing program by making local officials aware of the function and contributions of the historical society. Much of the financial growth of the society was due to Ruth's unselfish dedication to her task as treasurer and her years of hard work.

To Ruth Cripe the McHenry County Historical Society owes a large debt of gratitude and a most sincere thank you.

A copy of this special award will be placed in the entrance way to the museum to publicly proclaim our appreciation of Ruth and her work for the society.

We would like to finish this part of our newsletter by telling you that Mrs. Cripe is, and has been for some time, home from the hospital and is recuperating at home. She says she thinks there is daily improvement, but it is slow, and like all of us, she wishes it were faster.

MEMBERSHIP

Leta Clark, membership chairman, says that letters are being sent to delinquent members. We do not want to lose any of you--belonging to a historical society is too much fun. She also sent this list of new members.

NEW MEMBERS - SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER

M/M Roger Fanter, Crystal Lake; Miriam Schmitt, Harvard; Gladys A. Bradley, Marengo; Douglas A. Crane, Northfield, Minn.; Polly Crandall Questers; Borre, Irene, Richmond; Norine Mathey, Woodstock; Barbara Larson, Greenwood; M/M Samuel McCullough, Marengo; Martha Schmidt; Jane Berlin, Woodstock; Margaret DePaepe, Rockford; M/M Robert A. Fleck, McHenry; Mary Foote, Woodstock; Mason Toles, Phoenix, Arizona; Sandra South, Woodstock; Robert Papelder, Spring Grove; M/M Theodore Anderson, Ringwood; Harvey Kyle, Woodstock; Knute Olson, Huntley.

FALL VISITORS

This autumn has been much quieter at the Museum with farm fewer school groups visiting- perhaps, due to the energy shortage and the price of gasoline. On October 11th a fourth grade class from South School visited. The following week we received a package of nicely written letters from the children and a note from the teacher, Mrs. Laura DeRobertis which read: "Once again my class thoroughly enjoyed their trip to the museum. This is the 3rd year I have brought students to your museum and it has always turned out be be their most favorite field trip!" Beth Ann Radat wrote:

Dear Miss Clark & Mark,

Thank you for taking us on a tour of the Historical Society Museum.

The things I liked the best are the stage, costume room, lunch box, dolls, jail, salt and pepper shakers, post office, fire truck, music room, school room and toys. I like the hole museum.

Space doesn't permit printing all the letters, but it was interesting to note special items that children liked. Robin Granger liked the "newspaper with glass over it". To explain this choice it is necessary to state that a McHenry County resident happened to be in the theater the night that Lincoln was shot. The next morning he bought a newspaper telling of the assassination and brought it home to Richmond. We have it framed with glass on both sides so that more of this interesting paper can be read. Larry said that he "expesily liked the handmade clock, the jail and the arrowheads." We wish to thank the students for their interesting letters.

On October 20th a small group of Cub Scouts from McHenry visited. On November 9th, the students from the Alternative High School visited accompanied by their faculty members. One of the instructors was so impressed with the Museum that he is going to base a project on the history of McHenry County using the Museum as a resource. On November 19th Mr. Oberg's sixth grade class of 35 students enjoyed a tour of the Museum.

OBITURARIES

Again we have the names of many older citizens, who could, or did, tell us things they remembered of earlier days in our county. Two of these people were from Dunham township: Alfred E. Fisher, born in January of 1884 and J. Ivan Peters, born in October 1894. Both had been farmers. Mr. Peters was also a World War I veteran. Both died in August, Mr. Fisher, aged 95, in his home where, even at his advanced age, he lived alone.

Also in August, John W. Meyers of Harvard died. He was the son of Frederick and Augusta Fredericks Meyers who came to the Big Foot Prairie Community in the early days of that settlement. He was born in Boone County in 1882, and married Marcia Ramsay in that county. They returned to the Harvard area as their children were growing up, and have been involved citizens ever since.

Another Big Foot resident, Hollie B. Carbrey, died September 16th. She was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.S. Hawver, born to them in February, 1886. The John Hawvers were already established on Big Foot Prairie when the 1877 County Directory was published.

Rose Arp of Hebron lived in that town from the time of her birth in March, 1886. She was the daughter of James and Maren Bonde Road, and had been educated in the Hebron schools and at DeKalb Normal, long before that place became Northern Illinois University. She married Clyde Arp in 1932. She was much interested in the welfare of the Hebron Library.

Another Dunham township resident was Mary B. Book, of Bunker Hill Road in that area. Her death transpired in September at the age of ninety. She had been a citizen of Dunham for seventy-three years.

We have been told that Warren Brown of Marengo, a former collector on the Illinois Tollway, often thought of writing down his reminiscences about that task but never did.

Lula Murrie, eighty seven, died in California in September. She had been much interested in the Society, reading a daughter's or grandaughter's newsletters. She was the daughter of Charles M. and Susie Wallace Stevenson of the Stone School Area near the Boone County Line, early settlers of that area.

Some of these people we will miss personally, and all of them, their recollections. We have an interesting few paragraphs sent to The Tracer about the deaths of some of our members.

IN MEMORIAM

The McHenry County Historical Society was saddened to learn of the deaths of two of its long time members:

Minnie Martin died on October 15th at her home at Summerfield, Florida. Mrs. Martin and her late husband, Clinton, resided on Martin Road, McHenry where they farmed for many years. Both were charter members of the Historical Society and were donors of many interest-

ing items to the museum. Mrs. Martin was well known for her interest in genealogy and was a daughter of the American Revolution.

Mr. and Mrs. William Shotliff of Spring Grove, also long time members of the Historical Society, both died within the past year, Mr. Shotliff this month.

The editors of The Tracer would appreciate receiving information concerning the deaths of our members.

AN INVITATION AND ITS RESULTS

This fall District #200 (Woodstock area) invited respresentatives from all local organizations to meet with Dr. Habeck and other school administrators to explore the subject of what the school could do for the organizations and in what way they could serve the school. Curator Mark Haggitt requested that Alice Clark respresent the Historical Society at the meeting. Miss Clark told the school officials that the Society's Museum at Union Offered a resource for worthwhile field trips. She mentioned that over 850 children had visited the Museum during the past year, but none of them had been from Woodstock in fact no class from Woodstock had ever visited the Museum. The one class from District #200 which had visited was from the Greenwood School. She also mentioned that school groups had visited from as far as Johnsburg and Carpentersville, and that eleven different schools had participated. Miss Clark invited everyone to visit the Museum to investi gate its educational opportunities.

As a result of this meeting, one of the administrators present, Mrs. Sally Ronan, Principal of Northwood Elementary School, called to make an appointment for her faculty to visit the Museum on Nov. 12th. Alice and Leta Clark served as hostesses for the occasion. The teachers were surprised at the size of the collection, and Mr. David Wolf declared the Museum "Fantastic!"

THE TRACER LOSES A FRIEND

We are sorry to have to tell you that Russ Genderson, of the Big Foot General Store, is moving away. He has been an advertiser in The Tracer since the first issue that carried advertisements but more than that he has been a good and supportive friend of our Newsletter, our Museum and our Society. His General Store, which he is moving to Texas with him from Big Foot is a distinct loss to the community and the county. It was a perfect example of a museum displaying just one facet of an earlier era. The store was rated all over the nation as the finest example of the restoration of a country general store. Both the county and the Harvard area societies made an effort to find some way to keep it in Big Foot but could think of no way to raise the requisite amount of money. Since Mr. Gunderson had poured all his money and all his time for many years into acquiring the artifacts which were displayed for free we could not expect him to donate the store-store-museum to either Society. But we are very sorry to lose it from our era, and very sorry to lose such a good historian. Good luck, Russ, in your new home and undertaking.

THE STORY OF AN EARLY COUNTY FACTORY

In Dunham, more than a century ago, there was a factory for something other than cheese and milk products. In fact. Dunnam had two factories, one that made plows, and one that made washing machines. It is about this latter one that we can tell you most, because the building is still standing and people in the area recall stories about the factory, the man who invented the washing machine, his family, and about things that happened to them.

To know something of the factory, you have to first know something about the inventor. His name was Wood, Jacob Wood. He had come to Dunham township in 1846. twenty-eight years old, married six years, and probably with a child or two, or even three. We do not know how much land he immediately bought, but it was probably in Section 8, since that is where he built a log cabin for the family residence. It was a good solid building, and sometime later an addition was built on in the form of a lean-to at the back. It was shaded by a big cottonwood tree. **The family would live there for thirty years.**

This snapshot of the log cabin was made after the Davidson family owned the place, and the people are members of that family and friends.

The family would increase until there were four boys and one girl. The land was worked--there was a hoghouse of some sort not too far south of the cabin, and almost surely, there were chickens and shelters for the horses and there must have been a few cows. But the big dairy barn was not built until during the Civil War, and when it was erected, it was across the road where the new house would also be built, but that would be later.

We do not know when the mill was built. It is a frame building on the outside, with a dirt floor, but the partitions and the boiler and other accoutrements were made of brick, the kind that was called slop bricks, Edward Stevenson had a brick yard on county line, and these bricks probably came from there. They were made of mud, put in a form, set out in the sun to dry and then burned. When one hears all the different devices built into that mill, we know the man had an inventor's mind. Directly opposite the mill at the north end of the building he had a corn sheller and he had it so rigged that it kicked the cobs out right in front of the boiler so that the cobs could be shoveled into the fire to keep the boiler hot without further handling, and the steam from the boiler ran the sheller as well as the mill. Also, there was a well right under the mill house, and he had it arranged so that the water was raised to the boiler without hand work. The well was tightly sealed, and had two pipes down into it. Steam from the boiler went down one and forced water up in the other.

The mill was dismantled some years ago, but the building still stands. Besides farming and running the mill, he bought out the blacksmith at Chemung, a man named Doge or Goege, and moved the implements to his farm. The blacksmith shop he built on to the south end of the mill. It, too, was a frame building and is still standing. To lessen the danger of fire, he had the whole building lined with brick. Thanks to Jack Satorius, we have pictures of the combined building. Mrs. Davidson says that before the blacksmith shop was built, there was a porch running from the upstairs door and window on the second floor around the building to the west.

It was in this second floor loft where Woods worked on his washing machine. Probably he was anxious to make things as efficient in the house as he had them in the mill. Anyway he manufactured one that worked. No one knows just what it was like, although the Davidsons found slats and other pieces of wood that might have been for that purpose in the loft. It was good enough that he had it patented in Washington, D.C.

The taller part of this structure was the millhouse with the loft the place where the washers were made. There was a porch around the upper portion from the second story door around to the west. The extension to the south was the blacksmith shop.

Up until this time, things seem to have gone very well for the family. Dunham rumor says that all four boys served in the Union Army during the Civil War. According to the 1877 County Directory, only one son, Israel, did so, and he was with Company E, ninety-fifth Volunteer infantry. The story goes that he (or all four brothers) sent their money home while in service. When they came home they wanted it. Their father took them out of the cabin and across the road. He pointed at the big, and for that era, beautiful dairy barn. "There is your money", he said. His plan was that the boys should run the farm, and he would run the mill, the blacksmith shop and the factory. I asked if all of them stayed at home and fell in with those plans. Bill Davidson said that according to the stories some of them did, some did not.

In the 1872 county Atlas, the land that is registered in Jacob Wood's name is shown as the northeast quarter of Section 7, and the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 8. Then in the 1877 county directory, he lists himself as a farmer, section 7; Chemung post office. Owns, he says 200 acres of land two miles south of the Cheming depot. He had been supervisor, road commissioner, etc. He had been married since 1840 to Sarah Thompson, who was born in Brockville, C.W. and he himself had come from Kent County, C.W.

After the Civil War, they planned the home they would have. The bricks for it were in the yard when the Chicago fire took place. Bricks were so desperately needed there then that he let builders in Chicago have them and waited until 1876 to build their house. Today it still stands, lovely and gracious, although the Woods family only lived there twelve or thirteen years. You can see that these are no "slop bricks". The yard was landscaped, with several kinds of evergreen trees before the house was built. There was a hedge of arbor vitae, wired together so that, although the wires have been gone for decades, they are still very gnarled, and show the shape they were meant to be.

Here is a picture of the hedge planted over a hundred years ago as it looks today.

We know neither when he got the patent for his washer nor how many were sold. But another man had, it is thought, a patent for some part of the machine and he sued to stop Jacob Woods from marketing his washer. Woods fought the suit with everything he had. He went to Chicago so often the story goes, that he could ride his horse to the Chemung railroad depot, turn him loose and he would go home. In the evening, probably when the family heard the train whistle in Harvard, they would saddle the horse and start him down the road to the station, where a tired man would mount and ride home.

But all the trips did no good. In 1889, he sold the farm to the Davidson family whose descendants occupy it today. Seventy-one years old, and forty-nine years married, he moved his family to South Dakota.

Three other bits of possible information have been gathered. Many years ago in a grain bin on the George Whipple farm, there was an early washing machine. Was it one of Woods? And in the County Line Cemetery, a man named Thompson was buried in 1867. He was ninety one years old. He is not listed in any of the county directories, so he lived with some one. In 1906, his daughter Sarah Thompson, was buried in the same lot. On her stone, it says, "Wife of Jacob Wood". Roy Peterson, who with his father cared for the cemetery for more than fifty years says, "Well, they say Sarah and Jake eventually parted". A granddaughter did live in Harvard, but has been deceased for a score of years.

Before calling the story closed, we would thank Jack Satorius for taking the modern pictures; Selma and Bill Davidson for their help and their stories, and for loaning the picture of the log cabin; Roy Peterson of County Line Road for his help and stories. He says "Just hearsay" but how good it is when there is someone who treasures the stories of the early times and passes them on.

The is the beautiful house the Wood family enjoyed for only twelve years. It is now the home of William and Selma Davidson and is a place of beauty and warmth.

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This card was sent to Mrs. Allen in 1910, and also loaned to the newsletter by Mr. Hawver.

This Christmas card was sent to Mr. and Mrs. Rollin Allen in 1913, and loaned to The Tracer by their son-in-law, Neil Hawver.

MEMORIES OF CHRISTMAS

Since the holidays will be long past before another Tracer is printed we will include some remembrances of other years in this issue along with the best wishes for a peaceful and happy Christmas and a joyous New Year of the Tracer staff and the entire board of the McHenry County Historical Society. We had not been thinking of the need to use them in this Tracer, if ever, and have no permission to use anyone's name so all the recollections shall be anonymous.

An elderly gentleman tells us about his earliest recollections of Christmas. When he was quite small, his parents were accustomed to taking him with them to the midnight mass. He must have been the oldest child and as the years went by, they continued this habit, even after some of the children were older, and also receiving the Eucharist. This was back in the days when one did not eat anything at all before the reception of the Sacrament, and while the ordained time for fasting would not have been long, his mother thought this was not proper respect, and at their house you fasted from six o'clock. He remembers back to the time when he used to go to sleep in the corner of the pew, until the time when he was one of the older children also going to Communion, and one of the younger children, who had been sleeping against someone's arm fell off the seat when the arm was removed but did not even wake up. He had to be picked up and laid in the pew when the rest of the family returned from the altar. After mass it was out into the cold--"Why are Christmas Eves always so very cold?" he asks and get the old Ford to start. Long before there was any warmth in the car, they were home and hastening into the house where their mother flew at her cooking and everybody had a steak and eggs breakfast. He remembers it as food fit for heavenly visitors, instead of just hungry boys and girls. And parents. When no one could eat anymore, they rapidly piled the dishes in the sink and rushed into their living room, where, lo and behold! Santa had come while they were at church. This was the family Christmas. After the presents from Santa and their own gift exchange, finally they fell into bed to sleep. His father never called him to come help with the chores when he would go out later than usual to feed and milk, but as he grew older, conscience or something used to wake him and he would go out to lend a hand. Later they would go to the grandparents' house or have guests at their house but for this gentleman, Christmas was the midnight mass and the family breakfast.

A lady recalls when her grandparents lived at the end of a long, long lane and that "more than once" they could not get up it with the car. But Grandmother knew they would come, and they waded and staggered up the lane laden with packages and little folks, and "fell" into the house steamy and redolent of a wonderful Christmas goose dinner, with the aunt's family who had "come from far away" -- she thinks it was Chicago-and the uncle's family who lived on the other side of the driveway.

A gentleman remembers bringing the girl he afterward married--they have celebrated at least their golden wedding--to the roller-skating rink (in Saunder's hall in Harvard) from Woodstock one New Year's Eve. When the rink closed and they came out into a cold and snowy night, it was to be met with the news that the roads to Woodstock were entirely closed. A girl they did not know very well, invited them to come to her house with a group of her friends where they spent another few hours, eating oyster stew and playing cards. In the morning, when it got light, they were able to get back to Woodstock.

McHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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